MEMORIAL LANDSCAPES

World Images East and West

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MEMORIAL LANDSCAPE PAINTING FOR THE PEOPLE

Ink Tradition and Socialist Aesthetics in Mao Zedong's China

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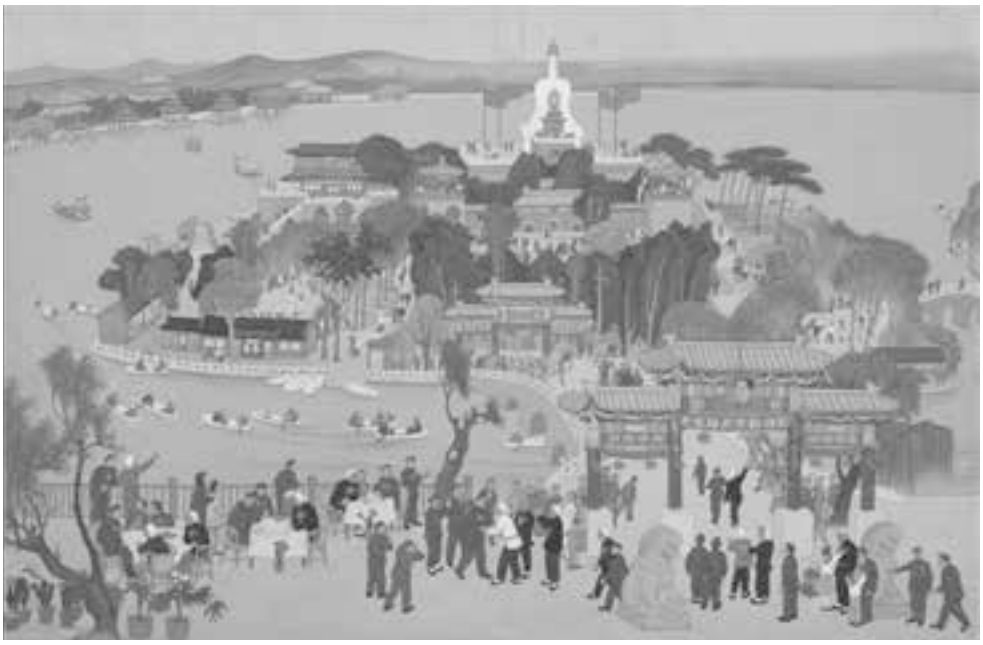
Conflicting notions of »landscape«

In 1956, Chinese artist Li Keran (李可染,1907–1989) published some of his landscape paintings in a catalogue and requested the venerated ink master Qi Baishi (齐白石, 1864–1957) to inscribe the cover title. The catalogue was titled *A Collection of Li Keran's Ink Landscape Drawings* (李可染水墨风景写生画集 *Li Keran shuimo fengjing xiesheng huaji*), and the Chinese word used for »landscape« was 风景 (fengjing). One prominent example of Li's work in the early 1950s is *Model Workers and Peasants Visiting Beihai Park* (工农劳模游北海 *Gongnong laomo you Beihai*), a drawing that staged him as a rising star in the art world of the new socialist China |ill. 79|. It is said that Li rather disliked using the term 风景 to describe his landscapes and changed it to the more traditional notion of 山水 (shanshui) in his 1959 edition of the *Collection of Li Keran's Ink Landscape Paintings* catalogue.[1] The artist's resolution to paint 山水 instead of 风景 was exemplified by his experimental work in the following years, including *Ten Thousand Mountains Bathed in Red* (万山红遍 *Wanshan hongbian*) |ill. 80|.

A comparison of the two works of art by Li Keran elucidates the palpable difference between 风景 and 山水. *Model Workers and Peasants Visiting Beihai Park* was conceived soon after the Chinese Communist Party took over Beijing and before the introduction of Soviet inspired academic style of Socialist Realism. The colorful painting adopts the party sanctioned folk style of New Year's pictures (年画 nianhua) to document the jubilant occasion of



79 Li Keran: *Model Workers and Peasants Visiting Beihai Park*, 1951, lithography (New Year's picture), 12.5 × 18.5 cm, Beijing, Li Keran Art Academy

model citizens of the new People's Republic of China touring Beihai Park, an imperial garden that was accessible only to the emperor and his guests before the 20th century, and by and large faithfully represents the topography of the famous park adjacent to the Forbidden City.[2] In contrast, *Ten Thousand Mountains Bathed in Red*, painted more than a decade later, is different in several ways: it is not a pictorial replica of a specific site; it relies heavily on the effects of light and shade to enliven space and mass, which reveals Li's awareness of the breathtaking Dutch landscapes by Rembrandt; and similar to the Northern Song monumental landscape paintings that Li admired, it combines multiple perspectives by tilting up the ground plane more drastically in the fore-and-middle ground and less so in the background.[3]

Li's sensitive response to the Chinese terminology of landscape and his preference of and experimentation with 山水 was common among his generation of ink painters in the new socialist regime. Ink landscapes were engrossed with fundamental aesthetic inclinations of traditional Chinese painting, including the spontaneity of execution, emphasis on artistic individuality, and absence of overt political statements.[4] Traditional ink painting as an emblem of China's ponderous past was repeatedly disparaged in the twentieth century. The first wave of attacks climaxed in the May Fourth New Cultural Movement starting from the late 1910s, when some considered European oil painting superior. But others either defended the tradi-

80 Li Keran: *Ten Thousand Mountains Bathed in Red*, 1963, ink and color on paper, 69.5 × 45.5 cm, Beijing, National Art Museum of China

tional medium or sought to combine the strength of both artistic conventions.[5] The second wave of destruction came after the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949. As the arts policy of the Communist Party prioritized the systematic implementation of European models of painting through the narrow passage of Soviet Socialist Realism, the traditional ink medium was largely disfavored. But a considerable number of artists strove to reinvigorate the great tradition of ink painting, and some focused on reviving the landscape subject matter and attained national recognition.[6] This paper studies a group of regional ink painters in Jiangsu Province and their artistic and philosophical contributions to the development of memorial landscape painting in China during the 1950s and 1960s.

New China and old art

The imported communist and socialist ideology was understandably at odds with many traditions of China, including ink-and-brush painting, an age-old elite medium that prized formalism and individual expression. It is unlikely that Russian writers such as Plekhanov and Trotsky interpreted Marxist aesthetics with Chinese ink painting in mind, which is no concern in our case, because they were both eclipsed by Lenin and had little impact on the popularity of Marxism in China.[7] The Leninist understanding of art and literature was upheld as the only, true socialist view even before the People's Republic of China was established. The basics were spelled out already in a series of ideological meetings held for writers and artists in the spring of 1942 with important speeches by Mao Zedong.[8] His remarks, often referred to as the *Yan'an Talks* (在延安文艺座谈会上的讲话), became the core of cultural policy in the early years of the People's Republic.

The Maoist ideology, based on Leninism, heralded the blanket acceptance of Socialist Realism in China's art world once the Communist Party established the central government in 1949. Oil painting was instantly ratified because it was an art that had been debated and remolded in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, but there was no direct Soviet model to follow when it came to ink painting. Just to name a few things that were challenging, if not unheard-of, to ink painters: art was to be a component of the revolutionary machinery; artists needed to identify with the masses and with the Chinese Communist Party; they must understand Marxist-Leninist writings and be familiar with and sympathetic to their audience, namely the workers, peasants, and soldiers; since Maoism ruled that all culture belonged to a certain class and party, artists had to reject various nonpolitical foundations for art such as humanism, idealism, liberalism, individualism, and art for art's sake.[9]

Due to the daunting discrepancy between the new ideological imposition and the cumbersome values of ink painting, many eschewed the problem by disregarding the traditional medium or leaving old ink painters as they were. It is not until 1953 that the poet and art critic Ai Qing (艾青, 1910–1996), father of the internationally renowned artist Ai Weiwei (艾未未, b. 1957), brought forward the issue of reforming traditional ink painting or »state painting« (国画 guohua).[10] He first offered a definition of the art, saying: »[. . .] *guohua*, in general, are paintings painted with Chinese brush, Chinese ink, and Chinese pigments on Chinese paper or silk. A more appropriate term would be *minzu huihua* (national painting).«[11] To Ai Qing, although old ink paintings were valuable cultural relics, contemporary »state painting« could easily contradict the development of socialism by continuing the practice of copying ancient models, an approach described by him as plagiarism. A change was due because the audience of such art was no longer cognoscenti of the elite class but rather the ordinary people. To serve the living people rather than the dead, Ai argued, new »state painting« must undergo a remolding process in which all genres, including figure, landscape, and bird-and-flower motifs, needed to have new form and new content. He recommended substituting depiction of real objects for copying old paintings as the fundamental curriculum for the study of national painting.[12]

Foreign »风景« over Chinese »山水«

One interesting note from reading Ai Qing's commentary on ink painting is that for landscape he used the term 风景 rather than 山水. Before the 19th century, the two terms bore disparate meanings in Chinese language. From the 5th century on, 风景 had denoted the ambience and view of a certain locale.[13] In comparison, 山水 referred to mountains and waters in the natural world, and since the 8th century it had been the designated expression for the subcategory of painting known as »landscape« in Europe.[14] In the 19th century, when encountered with European painting of natural scenery and especially Dutch *landschap*, Japanese artists and writers appropriated the phrase *hūkei* from the Chinese vocabulary to translate »landscape«, and soon their Chinese counterparts began to use the same characters 風景 (traditional writing for 风景) for the same purpose. The process is called »return graphic loan«, in which classical Chinese-character compounds were used by the Japanese to translate modern European words and were reintroduced into modern Chinese.[15] Reflecting and reinforcing the entrenched mentality of the East-West dichotomy in late Qing and Republican China, the terminological separation in naming landscape painting prevailed as Western 风景 and Chinese 山水 were distinguished from one another and not used interchangeably. Therefore, Ai Qing was one of the first Chinese writers to substitute 山水 with 风景, a term easily associated with naturalism in European art, in order to revolutionize the art of traditional ink painting.

Ai Qing's views on »state painting« were rather similar to those of his friend Jiang Feng (江丰, 1910–1983), a woodcut artist who had worked for the communist cause since the 1930s and was charged with reforming the Chinese art world under the new government. As a matter of fact, Jiang recommended applying Soviet (European) academic principles such as perspective and anatomy to all art.[16] Jiang Feng's and Ai Qing's diagnosis on »state painting« would have eradicated most traditional techniques associated with the medium and ensured a quick demise of ink aesthetics, if not for the intervention from above in 1953 with changes made in arts policy to encourage »state painting« and specialization.

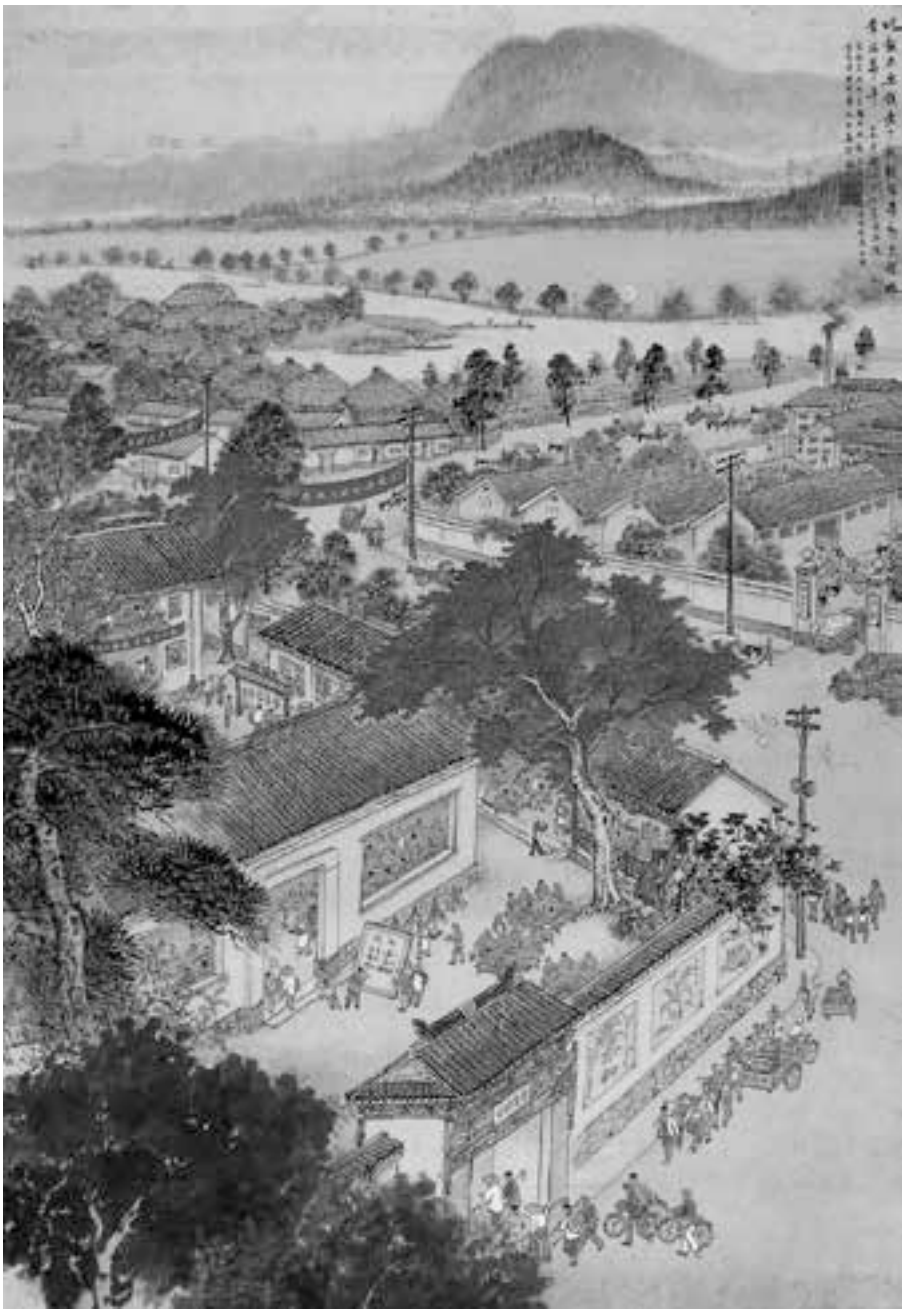
Among the counter-opinions, Zhou Yang's (周扬, 1908–1989) strong commitment to promoting the national heritage formed the basis of obstructing the wholesale Westernization of Chinese art. The origins of Zhou's theory might be found in the Leninist-Stalinist policy toward art, as Julia Andrews has pointed out: in 1930, a Soviet conference adopted Stalin's dictum that proletarian art must be »national in form and socialist in content«.[17] Zhou Yang's views had profound effects thanks to his high position in the party propaganda organ and the endorsement from Mao Zedong, and his references to national heritage could signal the political approval for traditional landscape painting and brush and ink techniques.[18] Unfortunately, the aesthetic consideration of ink painting by policy makers basically ended with the »state painting« debate in the mid-1950s as a byproduct of the Hundred Flowers Campaign, and Jiang Feng lost his control of the art world at the end of the Anti-Rightist campaign in 1956.[19] The Great Leap Forward (1958–1962) and the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976) worsen the politicization of »state painting« even more.

During the flowering of artistic activity between 1954 and 1957, two new styles of ink painting originated in the state-sponsored art academies in Beijing and Hangzhou respectively, and both focused on creating figure paintings by incorporating perspective and Socialist Realistic principles.[20] The reform of landscape painting remained on a theoretical level even though Zhou Yang claimed as early as 1953: »If we need figure painting, we also need landscape painting.«[21] Again, the term Zhou used for landscape is 风景, not 山水. Advocating the national heritage including ink painting, Zhou and by implication the Chinese authorities wanted ink artists to create 风景 paintings in the traditional medium. The task was difficult since the change was not a mere wordplay. Indeed, the fundamental conflicts between traditional »state painting« and Socialist Realism were accentuated by Zhou's unresolved juxtaposition of the national heritage and communist ideology. The politicization of »state painting« and eventually all arts in China from the mid-1950s on also made it impossible for the issue of remolding traditional ink painting to be addressed on a national level. It is in regional art groups that the genre of landscape painting was revived and more ink aesthetics retained.

Subversive regionalism

One of the new regional landscape styles that gained national reputation was developed by the artists from the Chinese Painting Institute of Jiangsu Province.[22] The institute made its national debut in Beijing, in the 1958 *Exhibition of Chinese Paintings from Jiangsu Province* (江苏省中国画展览会 *Jiangsusheng Zhongguohua zhanlanhui*). The ink paintings on display were well praised by critics and the authorities, and most frequently mentioned were several pieces carrying the inscription of »collectively created by the Jiangsu Chinese Painting Institute«.[23] What made the collective paintings eminent is probably not their content or style, but rather the collaborative act itself, which may be considered both a process and medium of artistic creation.[24] Not a new genre in Chinese art history, co-authored works of art, especially in the form of painting or calligraphy, had commonly been produced by scholar-amateurs during elegant gatherings. There were generally no specific themes, but the educated were supposed to communicate their artistic inspirations through painting, calligraphy, and poetry.[25] In contrast, the collective paintings by the Jiangsu artists typically had a clear subject and carried political messages. With the triumph of the Jiangsu paintings in Beijing, »collective creation« and »collective painting« soon became popular and continued to be a politically sanctioned way of artistic creation and collaboration even during the Cultural Revolution.

One prominent example from this group of collective paintings, *People's Commune Dining Hall* (人民公社食堂 *Renmin gongshe shitang*) |ill. 81|, was painted, according to the inscription, collaboratively by nine artists at the Jiangsu Institute, including Fu Baoshi (傅抱石, 1904–1965), Qian Songyan (钱松岩, 1899–1985), Yu Tongfu (余彤甫, 1897–1973), Wei Zixi (魏紫熙, 1915–2002), Song Wenzhi (宋文治, 1919–1999), Wu Junfa (吴俊发, 1927–2019), Zhang Wenjun (张文俊, 1918–2008), Ye Juwu (叶矩吾, b. 1923), and Ya Ming (亚明, 1924–



81 Chinese Painting Institute of Jiangsu Province: *People's Commune Dining Hall*, 1958, ink and color on paper, 146 × 96 cm, Hong Kong, M K Lau Collection

2002). The subject matter, the free-of-charge dining hall in a village, is the major component of a people's commune, a utopian idea brought to life by Mao Zedong's ambitious campaign of economic growth known as the Great Leap Forward.[26]

People's Commune Dining Hall, showing the bustling atmosphere in a rural community, is a painted documentation based on the Jiangsu painters' experience of visiting the countryside near Nanjing and drawing from life. Entering the picture from lower right, the viewer is first welcomed by the main gate of the dining facility, which could have been repurposed from an ancestral shrine. Tree leaves made up of ink washes veil the wall to the left of the entrance. On the right side there are three wall paintings or posters. One is titled »150,000 kilograms of rice per acre«, the other two illustrate a cornstalk that dwarfs a normal-sized child and a pumpkin that several people are dancing on, all of which exemplify the habitual and officially endorsed exaggeration of productivity at the time. A stream of people appear from the street corner and walk into the yard, while two volunteers are leaving on the three-wheeled carts and carrying meals to the kindergarten and nursing home. In the yard, a board reads: »In addition to the three dishes and one soup, there is an extra half kilo of pork for everyone.« Tables are set up in and out of the buildings and people are enjoying their sumptuous, free meals. Across the street, rows of granaries, storehouses, and food processing workshops ensure the supplies for the commune. In the background, another village lies afoot the remote hills. Traditional brushwork is not only employed to delineate the components of socialist modernization, such as electricity posts, loudspeakers, and trucks, but also to record the exaggerative propagandas that were commonly seen during the Great Leap Forward.

The aspiration to properly delineate the rich content and complex visual elements of the modern utopia led to the Jiangsu artists' collaboration.[27] The composition was first discussed and tested with sketches, and then several painters worked on different parts one after another. Qian Songyan was in charge of the main composition and painted all the buildings. He also illustrated the utility poles and trucks in the middle ground. Yu Tongfu painted the distant mountains and rivers; Fu Baoshi contributed the two trees in the lower left corner along with the inscription. All other painters might have participated through adding human figures or other vegetation, applying colors, or simply providing feedback and suggestions.[28]

The synthesizing process of a collective painting would likely require the contributors to subdue their individual styles in order to achieve a coherent visual experience, and only trained eyes would be able to discern the subtle traces left by a certain hand. Take Qian Songyan, for example. Qian was versed in traditional painting techniques and one of the most prolific among the artists at the Jiangsu Institute of Chinese Painting. In *People's Commune Dining Hall*, his delineation of the buildings and utility poles may appear rather ordinary, as the three-dimensional forms are scientifically foreshortened in accordance with linear perspective. But a closer look at the contour lines, especially the vertical ones framing the doorways and the utility poles, reveals Qian's unique brush lines of slight undulation. A perfectly straight line is a taboo to the traditional literati taste. It takes years for an artist to master the

ink brush to create such quivery lines, a result of the overflow of energy imbued from brush to paper rather than the lack of it.

Themes of revolution and construction

Collective painting elevated the Jiangsu painters onto the national stage and gave the individual artists some space to pursue their own interests in landscape subjects and styles as long as they complied with the political prescription of depicting real life in lieu of repeating old models and theses. A favored approach to ensure the inspiration came from reality was to take trips to collect visual experiences in different places near and far. In addition to nature and the people's new life, the Jiangsu artists often included in their itineraries famous revolutionary landmarks that highlighted the taxing Long March (1934–1935) of the Red Army and heralded the accession of the Chinese Communist Party. One exceptional result of such pilgrimages is *The Village of Hongyan* (红岩 *Hongyan*) by Qian Songyan |ill. 82|.

Qian was a native of Yixing, a southern Jiangsu city known for its production of »purple« clay (紫砂 zhisha) teapots. Unlike many traditional artists from larger cities such as Shanghai and Beijing who lamented the total loss of their literati clientele after the communist takeover, Qian was sincerely grateful for the new opportunities brought by the socialist government for him to have a secure job as art teacher and later join the Chinese Painting Institute of Jiangsu Province.[29] He wholeheartedly participated in many of the campaigns aimed at remolding traditional artists ideologically.[30] In September 1960, Qian joined his fellow Jiangsu painters on a three-month journey to visit natural attractions, new construction sites, and revolutionary monuments in half of China.[31]

82 Qian Songyan: The Village of Hongyan, 1962, ink and color on paper, 104 × 81.5 cm, Beijing, National Art Museum of China

Among his paintings inspired by this trip, *The Village of Hongyan* with its dominant depiction of a large red rock stands out. The title of the painting is the namesake of the village Qian visited in November 1960 when the Jiangsu group stayed in Chongqing, a southwest city having served as the wartime capital during the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937–1945). Hongyan village housed the headquarters of the Eighth Route Army and the Southern Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party between 1939 and 1946. *Red Crag* (红岩 *Hongyan*) is also the title of a contemporary novel by Luo Guangbin (罗广斌, 1924–1967) and Yang Yiyan (杨益言, 1925–2017), partly based on facts and recounting the struggles of the underground Communist Party agents against the Nationalist authorities in Chongqing in the darkest hours of 1948.[32] The novel was published in December 1961, and Qian Songyan exhibited the final version of his painting *The Village of Hongyan* soon in 1962. The coincidental publication of the textual and pictorial references to »红岩« warrants a scrutiny of the term itself. The Chinese term combines two characters: »红« means red, and »岩« means rock or crag. In addition to being the name of the historic village, the red rock as a motif repeatedly emerges in the novel when communist agents were executed and their blood marked the rocky grounds they fought and died on. The term must have appealed strongly to Qian Songyan as he kept reworking on the painting for almost two years. One reason could be that his given name contains the same character »岩«, and by associating his name with the sacred landmark Qian hoped to express his allegiance to the communist revolution.

Qian Songyan's ink sketches and color drafts of *The Village of Hongyan* demonstrate the tremendous effort he took to balance the ideological burdens and artistic concerns. Topographical accuracy dominated at first as he faithfully recaptured the view of the village from afar: many trees covering the mountain slopes and the new buildings constructed atop the hill in the 1950s as memorial halls of revolutionary history.[33] Determined to transform such memorial 风景into 山水, Qian resorted to the red color and more dramatic composition. The painter understood that red was part of the village's name and symbolized the revolutionary spirit, and so he emphasized the hue by reducing foreground vegetation and making the red-tinted cliff larger and more imposing.[34] To monumentalize the cliff, Qian switched to a lower vantage point, a compositional strategy he learnt from Shi Lu (石鲁, 1919–1982) and other Xi'an based painters in 1960.[35] Qian identified two traditional methods to enhance the effect of the painting.[36] The remaining banana tree leaves, green in some drafts, were delineated with monochromatic black ink outlines (白描 baimiao); ground cinnabar (朱砂 zhusha) mixed with water made the red rock face elegant, not gaudy. What may impress connoisseurs of ink aesthetics is that Qian still found opportunities to use classical brushwork and tasteful coloring to render a new landscape full of political references.

Another theme of memorial landscape related to the plein-air trips taken by the Jiangsu artists is exemplified in the painted scenes of industrialization and infrastructure building. One of the ambitious and unrealistic projects of the Great Leap Forward was the metallurgical campaign of engaging every work unit in steelmaking and requiring every family to donate household objects that contained iron. With all the pots and pans thrown in the back-

yard furnaces and manufactured into inferior or useless steel, the people had no utensils to cook food in, which led to the expedient solution of setting up people's communes and offering free food. When the Jiangsu painters were assigned to represent the frenetic, buoyant scenes of construction, most chose to approach it by using their ink brush as a sketching pencil and giving up on traditional techniques. But Qian Songyan attempted his best to reserve bits of calligraphic piquancy in some of the most challenging pieces such as *Fighting for Steel* (为钢铁而战 *Wei gangtie erzhan*) |ill. 83|. Here, architectonic forms were used to delineate fully stoked furnaces rather than ageless mountains. It could be argued that Qian was borrowing from the traditional means of depicting architectures in boundary painting (界画 jiehua). The painting might have lost its literati flavor but was deemed suitable for the new society and its people. As a matter of fact, Qian's draft became the basis of a much larger composition of the same title, another collective painting that were produced by the Jiangsu artists along with the art faculty and students from the Nanjing Art Academy and the Nanjing Normal University.[37]

83 Qian Songyan: *Fighting for Steel*, 1958, ink and color on paper, 53.5 × 36.5 cm, location unknown

Poetry and politics

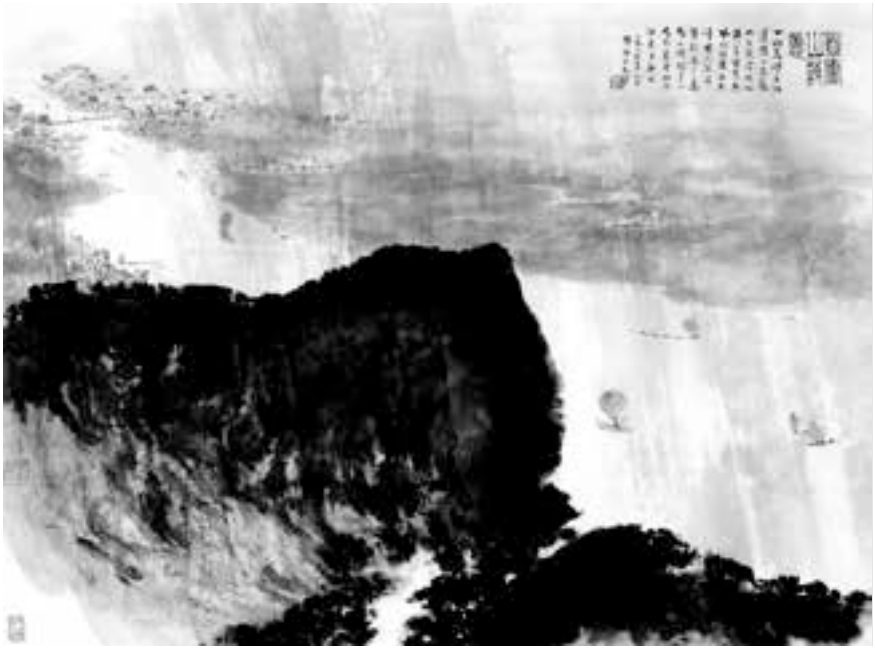
Qian Songyan's versatility as an ink painter facilitated his experiment of turning 风景 sketches into 山水 paintings, but other regional artists found it difficult to make that leap particularly in picturing the theme of construction. Fu Baoshi, another key figure in the Jiangsu group, also ventured to materialize the theme but was unsatisfied by the results.[38] His participation in the collective projects was generally limited to adding unimportant elements or writing inscriptions.[39] But he redeemed himself by well mastering the integration of Revolutionary Romanticism and Revolutionary Realism in many of his paintings, especially those illustrating Mao Zedong's poems.[40]

Fu Baoshi was one of the few artists in Maoist China whose artistic career did not suffer in the incessant political farces. He studied Chinese art history in Japan briefly in the mid-1930s and was exposed to the Nihonga (日本画) or Japanese-style painting movement, but he downplayed that experience once the Second Sino-Japanese War broke out and remained xenophobic toward Japan throughout his life. Also, he maintained a strong connection with the writer and historian Guo Moruo (郭沫若, 1892–1978), who was backed by Zhou Enlai, first Prime Minister of the People's Republic of China.[41] Fu's political savvy is reflected in his apt utilization of Mao's poetry to promote his artistic ideals and styles, including the 抱石皴 (baoshicun) – a scratchy stroke resulting from semiautomatic brushwork and representing the surface texture of mountain rocks – as well as his focus on water both as a poetic subject and experimental medium.[42]

In *Ascent of Mount Lu* (登庐山 *Deng Lushan*), Fu successfully balanced political allegiance, lyrical sentiment, and personal style |ill. 84|. The work was inspired by Mao Zedong's 1959 poem of the same title:

> Perching as after flight, the mountain towers over the Yangtze;
> I have overleapt four hundred twists to its green crest.
> Cold-eyed I survey the world beyond the seas;
> A hot wind spatters raindrops on the sky-brooded waters.
> Clouds cluster over the nine streams, the yellow crane floating,
> And billows roll on to the eastern coast, white foam flying.
> Who knows whither Prefect Tao Yuan-ming is gone
> Now that he can till fields in the Land of Peach Blossoms?[43]

In the painting, Fu used his signature 抱石皴 brushstrokes and ink washes to silhouette the dark boulder sitting on the left riverbank, and he represented Mao's viewpoint from the top a peak of the mountain with a bird's eye view of the broad water connecting the Yangtze River with Lake Poyang and the adjacent lands. The rain in the poem was materialized with a curtain of diluted ink and inclined stripes, the dramatic effect of which was sought after by modern Nihonga artists in Japan and must have appealed to Fu during his study near Tokyo



84 Fu Baoshi: *Ascent of Mount Lu*, 1964, ink and color on paper, 68.5 × 92 cm, Nanjing, Chinese Painting Institute of Jiangsu Province

between 1932 and 1935.[44] The painting could be mistaken as a response to a classical poem on the beauty of nature if not for the modernized township in the top left composition, with its new bridge and power plant chimneys, as well as the steamboats busy traveling up and down the waterway. It has been argued that Fu's pre-People's Republic work shows his interest of employing painting to interpret traditional poetry, and it is apparent that he appropriated the same power of imagination and creativity to visualize Mao's verses, which resulted in a lyrical landscape more integral than that purely based on travel sketches.[45]

As early as 1959, Fu Baoshi was recognized by the central government as reliable and original, and one of his rewards was a glorious commission in Beijing – an ink painting of tremendous size to decorate the newly constructed People's Great Hall in Tian'anmen Square. Fu was chosen due to his artistic influence as well as leadership of the Chinese Painting Institute of Jiangsu Province, whose group exhibition in the capital the year before captured great attention from the authorities and a national audience. Fu excelled at landscape and figure painting equally, but the commission was a pure landscape painting based on Mao's poem *Ode to Snow* (沁园春 • 雪 *Qinyuanchun xue*) of 1936, the command of which reflected the Jiangsu group's reputation for landscape painting. The popularity of collective painting might also

have facilitated the administrative decision of pairing Fu with the Cantonese artist Guan Shanyue (关山月, 1912–2000), who inherited the mantle of the Lingnan School. Even though the final product of the collaboration has been considered less perfect than the drafts designed by Fu Baoshi, *This Land So Rich in Beauty* (江山如此多娇 *Jiangshan ruci duojiao*) nevertheless became a favorite backdrop for photo ops of foreign dignitaries and delegations visiting China, including Richard Nixon's 1972 call as an effort at détente of the Sino-American relations during the Cold War |ill. 85|.[46] The monumental landscape painting, on permanent display in an important public building, proves that »state painting« including landscape painting could serve the political and aesthetic agendas of socialist China.

»… ink and brush should follow the times«

In the ideology-oriented art world of China under Mao Zedong, the success of regional schools required talented local artists, effective arts leaders, and strong supports from local and national political leaders.[47] On the one hand, Fu Baoshi's status as an ideologically reliable artist and his personal connection to national officials served as a double insurance for the prosperity of the Jiangsu group; on the other, the reform of traditionalists seemed to be effective as many of the Jiangsu artists mastered the essence of »criticism and self-criticism« (批评与自我批评 piping yu ziwo piping). In a 1959 article, Fu criticized two forms of »superstition« among traditionalists: blindly following historical masters (迷信古人 mixin guren), and blindly believing in ink and brush (迷信笔墨 mixin bimo).[48] What is more, Fu admitted that he was once among those who had been blindfolded and should have been condemned. Fu took this self-humiliating stance because he knew clearly that artistic problems, at that time, were first and foremost political problems.

However, submitting to ideological correctness was not Fu Baoshi's ultimate purpose; under the banner of »criticism and self-criticism«, he still strived to address in the same article the value of ink aesthetics in socialist China. He cited the late Ming and early Qing monk painter Shitao's (石涛, 1642–1707) famous saying, that »ink and brush should follow the times« (笔墨当随时代 bimo dangsui shidai).[49] Fu argued that many types of classical Chinese painting had fulfilled the needs of their times, which proved the adaptability of the ink medium. He even risked discussing the notion of »not seeking formal likeness« (不求形似 buqiu xingsi) by the Yuan literati master Ni Zan (倪瓚, 1301–1374), which could become an easy target of attacks on formalism and individualism in one of the frequent political campaigns initiated by the Chinese Communist Party. Fu started by equating the current decree of »ideology comes first, then art« (思想第一艺术第二 sixiang diyi yishu dier) with Ni Zan's subjecting form to expressive needs.[50] Although it is palpable that Ni was after self-expression in the 14th century, Fu contended presently such expression could and should reflect the masses' mentality, and he eventually came back to the point that ink and brush should echo the correct thinking of the time.[51] Although opportunistic, Fu's rhetoric sustained the discussion on

84 Fu Baoshi: *Ascent of Mount Lu*, 1964, ink and color on paper, 68.5 × 92 cm, Nanjing, Chinese Painting Institute of Jiangsu Province

the value of traditional ink aesthetics in a socialist context. When the whole nation was slipping into the circus of politics and a unified, national approach to ink landscape painting was no longer a priority, regional efforts sowed the last hope of rescuing and revitalizing the subject and medium.

In the early years of the People's Republic of China, traditional 山水 painting, like all other forms of art serving the people, must be reformed to accommodate Maoist aesthetics. Although politicians and art critics disputed the measures of »remolding« ink painting, many consensually adopted the term 风景 to describe the transformed ink landscape. Many ink painters, however, preferred 山水 both in theory and practice. The changing terminology of ink landscape was on the one hand a response to the Soviet model and, on the other, rooted in China's neologism at the turn of the 20th century that introduced European concepts often through the mediation of modern Japanese language. More importantly, the equivocal juxtaposition of 山水 and 风景was more than a phenomenon due to political pressure, and rather signified the altered cultural practice of landscape painting, especially the conversion from copying old masterpieces to drawing from nature and life. Albeit born in the highly charged political environment, a new life was given to China's enduring tradition of memorial landscape painting in the 1950s and 1960s.

1 See Shu Shijun (舒士俊): 探究风景, 山水和丘壑的演进关系 (*On the relations of fengjing, sanshui, and qiuhe*), in: 国画家 (*Chinese Ink Painters*) 4/2016, pp. 2–5, p. 2.

2 The location of certain landmarks is slightly manipulated to allow a better composition; see Yan Geng: *A New Earthly Paradise. Appropriation and Politics in Li Keran's Representation of Beihai Park*, in: *Archives of Asian Art* 1/2014, pp. 75–92, pp. 79 ff.

3 See Julia F. Andrews: *The Art of Modern China*, Berkeley 2012, p. 172.

4 See Julia F. Andrews: *Painters and Politics in the People's Republic of China, 1949–1979*, Berkeley 1995, p. 181.

5 See Kuiyi Shen: *Entering a New Era. Transformation and Innovation in Chinese Painting, 1895–1930*, in: Julia F. Andrews et al. (eds.): *Between the Thunder and the Rain. Chinese Paintings from the Opium War to the Cultural Revolution, 1940–1979*, San Francisco 2000, pp. 97–117, pp. 97 ff.

6 See Andrews 2012, pp. 161 ff.

7 See Margaret M. Bullitt: *Toward a Marxist Theory of Aesthetics. The Development of Socialist Realism in the Soviet Union*, in: *The Russian Review* 1/1976, pp. 53–76.

8 For a translation and discussion of Mao's text, see Bonnie S. McDougall: *Mao Zedong's »Talks at the Yan'an Conference on Literature and Art«. A Translation of the 1943 Text with Commentary*, Ann Arbor 1980 (Michigan Papers in Chinese Studies, vol. 39).

9 See Andrews 1995, pp. 19 ff.

10 See Ai Qing (艾青): 谈中国画 (*On Chinese Painting*), in: 文艺报 (*Literature and Art Newspaper*) 15/1953, pp. 7–9.

11 Andrews 1995, p. 112.

12 Ai Qing's essay is excerpted and translated ibid., pp. 112–118.

13 A search in the databases of collections of Chinese books such as 四庫全書 (*The Complete Library in Four Sections*) shows the earliest textual records of the term are in the poems by Tao Yuanming (陶淵明, 365–427) and Bao Zhao (鮑照, 415–470), and in 世說新語 (*A New Account of the Tales of the World*), compiled by Liu Yiqing (劉義慶, 403–444) and other scholars in the Southern Dynasties.

14 As a category of ink painting, landscape was first developed around the 5th century. But using 山水 to name the category started later by Tang poets such as Du Fu (杜甫, 712–770); see Wen Fong: *Beyond Representation. Chinese Painting and Calligraphy, 8th–14th Century*, New York 1992, pp. 71 f.

15 See Lydia Liu: *Translingual Practice. Literature, National Culture, and Translated Modernity – China, 1900–1937*, Stanford 1995, p. 302.

16 See Andrews 1995, p. 24.

17 See ibid., p. 120.

18 See ibid., pp. 119 f.

19 See ibid., p. 180 and p. 182.

20 According to Julia Andrews, the Beijing style leaned more heavily on modeling three-dimensional volumes and rendering effects of illumination. In essence, this method applied Western techniques to Chinese paper and almost ignored those of China's own tradition, which would have pleased Jiang Feng and Ai Qing. The Hangzhou style was somewhat more gestural, relying more heavily on energetic outline strokes and slightly abstract washes, and retained a few techniques that may be associated with the late 19th century Shanghai school. The traces of calligraphic piquancy in the brushwork were tolerated thanks to Zhou Yang's defense for traditional techniques of ink painting; see Andrews 2012, pp. 162 ff.

21 Quoted after Andrews 1995, p. 119.

22 The Chinese Painting Institutes were first established in Beijing and Shanghai as regional and municipal units hosting old unemployed ink painters thanks to the proposal made by the Prime Minister Zhou Enlai in 1956. The Cultural Bureau of Jiangsu Province followed suit in the same year and formed one in Nanjing; see Wan Xinhua (万新华): 图式革新与趣味转变——以十七年江苏国画家笔下的建设主题为例 (*Changing Schema and Taste. Construction Themed Paintings by the Jiangsu Ink Painters in Seventeen Years*), in: 美术学研究 (*Fine Arts Research*) 1/2011, pp. 277–319, p. 284.

23 The official journal of the China Artists Association, 美术 (*Fine Arts*), dedicated the January 1959 issue to the exhibition reports; many praised the Jiangsu group as a good model of leading the development of ink painting in the new era.

24 See Christina Ho: *The People Eat for Free and the Art of Collective Production in Maoist China*, in: *The Art Bulletin* 3/2016, pp. 348–372.

25 See Ellen Johnston Laing: *Real or Ideal. The Problem of the »Elegant Gathering in the Western Garden« in Chinese Historical and Art Historical Records*, in: *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 3/1968, pp. 419–435.

26 The movement aspired to demonstrate the superiority of communism over capitalism through catching up with and surpassing the industrial productivity of Great Britain and the United States in fifteen years. Unrealistic projects were carried out all over China. People's communes and free dining services first rolled out in villages and then in urban areas. It has been described as a period of having »big pot meals«. People in a commune worked and ate together, and supposedly they would work hard and also could eat as much as they wanted, neither of which came true.

27 Some traditionalists were trained in only one or two types of ink painting. Even if one were versatile, one would find it difficult to immediately change to the Party-approved styles of Socialist Realism. In order to demonstrate that Chinese ink painting could and would embrace the multifaceted phenomena of the new society, the first and foremost task was to record everything into the picture by deploying individual talents in a diverse group (information provided by Xiao Ping, interview, 1 September 2008.

28 I thank Mr. Xiao Ping (萧平) for his help of identifying the individual styles and reconstructing the painting process, interview, 1 September 2008.

29 Qian detailed his artistic training and career in a series of installments published in 江苏画刊 (*Jiangsu Pictorial*) in 1986 and frequently conveyed his gratitude to the Chinese Communist Party and the People's Republic of China; see Qian Songyan (钱松岩): 学画溯童年 (*Learning to Paint in My Childhood*), in: Ma Hongzeng (马鸿增): 钱松岩研究 (*Research on Qian Songyan*), Nanjing 1990, pp. 109–133.

30 See Andrews 2012, p. 171.

31 See Qian Songyan (钱松岩): 壮游万里画丹青 (*Painting during the Grand Tour*), in: Ma Hongzeng 1990, pp. 152–157.

32 The Chinese version was first published in 1961, and an English version was published later by the Foreign Language Press; see Guangbin Luo and Yiyan Yang: *Red Crag*, Beijing 1978.

33 Wan Xinhua (万新华): 钱松岩革命圣地画创作试探——以红岩, 遵义为例 (*Qian Songyan's Creation of Paintings of Revolutionary Landmarks. Hongyan and Zunyi*), in: 中国国家美术 (*Chinese National Art*) 1/2011, pp. 53–59.

34 Qian Songyan (钱松岩): 创作红岩点滴 (*Detailing the Creation of Hongyan*), in: 美术 (*Fine Arts*) 4/1963; reprinted in: Ma Hongzeng 1990, pp. 157–158.

35 Xu Huping (徐湖平) et al.: 钱松岩绘画艺术学术研讨会发言纪要 (*A Summary of the Discussions at the Symposium on Qian Songyan's Art of Painting*), in: 书画世界 (*The World of Chinese Art and Calligraphy*) 1/2006, pp. 18–25, p. 20.

36 See Qian Songyan 1963 [1990], p. 158.

37 See Wan Xinhua 2011, p. 287.

38 See Wan Xinhua (万新华): 图式革新与趣味转变——以傅抱石的若干建设主题作品为例 (*Changing Schema and Taste: Several of Fu Baoshi's Works on the Theme of Construction*), in: 美术学研究 (*Fine Arts Research*) 1/2011, pp. 314–337.

39 See Chen Lüsheng (陈履生): 理想化的人间乐园——关于人民公社食堂 (*An Idealized Paradise on Earth. On the People's Commune Dining Hall*), in: 嘉德通讯 (*China Guardian Bulletin*) 3/1997, pp. 17–19, p. 18.

40 See Julia F. Andrews: *The Art of Revolutionary Romanticism, 1949–1965*, in: Anita Chung et al.: *Chinese Art in an Age of Revolution. Fu Baoshi (1904–1965)*, New Haven 2010, pp. 43–56.

41 See Andrews 1995, p. 259.

42 For the prominent role of water in Fu's art, see David Clarke: *Raining, Drowning, and Swimming. Fu Baoshi and Water*, in: *Art History* 1/2006, pp. 108–135.

43 Mao Zedong: *Ascent of Lushan* (1 July 1959), in: *Marxists Internet Archive*, www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/poems/poems27.htm (accessed 15 March 2019).

44 See Tamaki Maeda and Aida Yuen Wong: *Kindred Spirits. Fu Baoshi and the Japanese Art World*, in: Anita Chung et al. 2010, pp. 35–41.

45 See Wan Xinhua 2010, p. 321.

46 See Ho 2016, pp. 367 ff.

47 See Andrews 1995, p. 251.

48 See Fu Baoshi (傅抱石): 政治挂了帅，笔墨就不同——从江苏省中国画展览会谈起 (*When Politics Leads, the Art of Ink and Brush is Different. On the Exhibition of Chinese Paintings from Jiangsu Province*), in: 美术 (*Fine Arts*) 1/1959, pp. 4–5.

49 Quoted after ibid., p. 5.

50 See ibid.

51 See ibid.